

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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O R 221752Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5530

AMCONSUL BELIZE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PN

SUBJECT: TORRIJOS TRAVELS TO BOLIVIA, GUATEMALA AND CUBA

REF: PANAMA 5487

SUMMARY: MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT YESTERDAY CONFIRMED TORRIJOS' VISIT TO BOLIVIA OCT. 25-27, HIS ATTENDANCE CENTRAL AMERICAN CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING IN GUATEMALA OCT. 31, AND GAVE DATE FOR HIS VISIT TO CUBA AS JAN. 10, 1976. VISIT TO CUBA DOES NOT INDICATE TURN TO LEFT IN GOP FOREIGN POLICY, BUT SHOULD BE VIEWED IN TERMS OF TORRIJOS' DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES. END SUMMARY.

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1. OFFICIAL SOURCES ANNOUNCED ON OCT. 21 THAT PANAMANIAN

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS' LONG PLANNED, AND ONCE POSTPONED TRIP TO BOLIVIA WILL TAKE PLACE ON OCT. 25 AND 26. TORRIJOS AND HIS PARTY (COMPOSITION OF WHICH FOLLOWS SEPTEL BOLIVIA) WILL ARRIVE IN SANTA CRUZ DE LA SIERRA AT 10:00 A.M. FRIDAY, OCT. 25 AND RETURN TO PANAMA ON SUNDAY, OCT. 27. LOWER ALTITUDE OF SANTA CRUZ REASON FOR VISIT THERE RATHER THAN LA PAZ.

2. SAME NEWS RELEASE CONFIRMED TORRIJOS WILL ATTEND CENTRAL AMERICAN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING IN GUATEMALA ON OCT. 31. PANAMA PRESS STATES AGENDA OF THAT MEETING WILL CONCERN ITSELF PRINCIPALLY WITH BELIZE AND THE CANAL. (SEPTEL ON PANAMA'S VIEWS ON BELIZE-GUATEMALA QUESTION BEING SENT).

3. AT SAME TIME TORRIJOS' LONG-BRUIED VISIT TO CUBA HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FROM VAGUE PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED "BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR" TO JANUARY 10, 1976 (SEE REFTEL). TORRIJOS IS EXPECTED TO REMAIN IN CUBA FOR FIVE DAYS.

4. NEWS OF THE RESCHEDULING OF VISIT TO CUBA HAS NOT RECEIVED PUBLICITY IN PRESS, BUT IT WAS BROADCAST ON THE NATIONAL TELEVISION NETWORK.

5. COMMENT ON TRIP TO CUBA: EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE TORRIJOS' VISIT TO CUBA INDICATES AN "OPENING TO THE LEFT" IN GOP FOREIGN POLICY AT THE MOMENT, NOR THAT IT PRESAGES ANY SUCH IN THE NEAR FUTURE. TORRIJOS HAS HAD AN INVITATION TO PAY A VISIT TO CUBA FOR SOME TIME, AND THE CUBANS HAVE CONTINUED PRESSING IT UPON HIM. IN EMBASSY'S JUDGMENT, THE VISIT SHOULD BE PRIMARILY REGARDED IN TERMS OF PANAMA'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL MILIEU. A STATE TOUR OF CUBA WILL TIGHTEN TORRIJOS' SAGGING IMAGE AS "MAXIMUM REVOLUTIONARY LEADER" WHICH HE VALUES HIGHLY, WILL MAKE HAY WITH TORRIJOS' INCREASINGLY RESTIVE LEFTIST SUPPORTERS, AND WILL ASSERT PANAMA'S SOVEREIGN ABILITY TO CONDUCT RELIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LATIONS WITH WHOM IT PLEASES. PANAMAJS DIPLOMATIC CAMPAIGN TO GARNER SUPPORT FOR RECOVERY OF JURISDICTION OVER THE CANAL ZONE IS COUCHED IN TERMS OF NATIONAL DIGNITY AND THE "PERFECTION OF ITS INDEPENDENCE". ITS "FLAWED" INDEPENDENCE IS REGARDED NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF THE PRESENCE OF THE CANAL ZONE, BUT ALSO ITS PAST HISTORY OF CLOSE, AND AS HERE PERCEIVED "SUBSERVIENT", RELATIONS WITH THE

UNITED STATES ON MANY OTHER MATTERS.

6. A PROMINENT PANAMANIAN OLIGARCH HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT RATHER THAN VEER TO THE LEFT, THE GOP IS TURNING SLIGHTLY TO THE RIGHT. THE SPEECHES ON OCTOBER 11 BY TORRIJOS AND LAKAS POINTED CLEARLY IN THAT DIRECTION AS DO THE CONSULTATIONS AND OTHER RECENT EFFORTS TO TOP GOP OFFICIALS TO WOO CONSERVATIVES. SOURCE DESCRIBED THE TRIPS TO CUBA AS COSMETIC "FRILLS" AND SUGGESTED THE UNITED STATES SHOULD CONSIDER THEM IN THEIR PRIMARY CONTEXT--THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE.

7. TORRIJOS HAS GIVEN, IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, CLEAR ASSURANCES IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE THAT HE IS SENSITIVE TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES IN THE UNITED STATES. HIS OCTOBER 11 "STATE OF THE REVOLUTION" SPEECH IS THE MOST RECENT AND FORTHRIGHT STATEMENT OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR NEEDS--PARTICULARLY AS TO TIMING OF A NEW TREATY AND OPPOSITION TO IT IN THE U.S. CONGRESS. HE IS NOT AS SENSITIVE TO OUR NEEDS AS WE WOULD LIKE, THAT IS TRUE, BUT HIS FIRST PRIORITY IS TO BALANCE AND MANEUVER THE COMPONENTS THAT COMPRISE HIS COALITION ON THE DOMESTIC SCENE--WITHOUT WHOSE SUPPORT HE CANNOT CONTINUE TO GOVERN NOR CARRY FORWARD THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS.
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